



## 23RD NAVAJO NATION COUNCIL OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd commends proclamation establishing October as the school bus safety awareness month



**Photo:** Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd, President Russell Begaye, Vice President Jonathan Nez, and bus drivers and staff from the Ganado Unified School District at the proclamation signing for the “National School Bus Safety Month,” on Aug. 23, 2017 in Window Rock, Ariz.

**WINDOW ROCK** – Council Delegate Alton Joe Shepherd (Jeddito, Cornfields, Ganado, Kin Dah Łichíí, Steamboat) and Ganado Unified School District bus drivers and staff met with President Russell Begaye and Vice President Jonathan Nez to discuss the importance of school bus safety throughout the Navajo Nation.

On Wednesday, President Begaye and Vice President Nez signed a proclamation declaring October 2017 as “National School Bus Safety Month,” an initiative that stemmed from the advocacy of Delegate Shepherd and GUSD bus drivers, who stressed the need to uphold safety on behalf of students and the community.

Delegate Shepherd, who also serves as the Apache County Supervisor for Dist. 2, stated that the GUSD bus drivers have consistently coordinated school bus safety initiatives and community outreach, and encouraged other school districts to implement a similar safety initiative and to report problematic areas to their school boards.

“I want to thank President Begaye and Vice President Nez for supporting this issue and taking the time to declare this proclamation. When we proclaim a month for school bus safety, I think that gives other school boards across the Navajo Nation a chance to interact with their local communities, and Ganado has been doing that for several years now,” said Delegate Shepherd.

He added that he would also establish a similar proclamation for Apache County, as well as advocate to improve road infrastructure such as widening, paving, and maintaining roads to allow school buses to pick up students and avoid road and traffic issues due to inclement weather.

Delegate Shepherd commended the GUSD bus drivers for advocating for school bus safety on a broad level by broadcasting safety messages on local radio stations.

“[Bus driver] Jackson Curtis, you hear him on the radio telling people to slow down around the bus stop areas. We want to take that to the next level. I am very proud of all the bus drivers that are here and how they continue to keep Navajo students safe when traveling to and from school,” said Delegate Shepherd.

GUSD bus drivers and staff who were present at the signing of the proclamation included Jackson Curtis, Freddie Yazzie, Frederick Shirley, Davis Begay, Lynette Looking-Back, and Norma Noble.

President Begaye thanked the bus drivers for their efforts and said the Navajo Nation will do more to promote bus safety during the month of October.

“Parents place their kids in the hands of the bus drivers, to make sure that they get picked up safely, delivered to the school safely, and then returned home. So I know, as a parent, I would really say ‘let’s praise the bus drivers’ because they are one of the most important employees at the school. The students’ lives are in their hands,” said President Begaye.

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